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New York

President: Mr. Essy ..... (Côte d'Ivoire)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 42 *(continued)*

The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development

Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/489 and Corr.1);

Notes by the Secretary-General (A/49/59-S/1994/47, A/49/116-S/1994/385, A/49/281-S/1994/886, A/49/585)

Draft resolution (A/49/L.35)

Mr. Bivero (Venezuela) *(interpretation from Spanish):* The progress made in Central America in the field of peace, democracy and development, which is properly reflected in the report of the Secretary-General, is a source of special satisfaction to Venezuela, which has actively supported the attainment of that objective in the sub-region.

The Central American process today, owing mainly to the endeavours of the countries of the region themselves, is well on the road to national reconciliation and the strengthening of democracy and of the countries' institutions.

The establishment of peace in Central America will also be to the credit of the United Nations, which has been carrying out, and continues to carry out, its mediation functions, facilitating dialogue and negotiation, monitoring the implementation of agreements and dealing with any omissions or problems whenever necessary. Now we are entering a rather delicate process. The consolidation of peace requires vision and a broad spirit of compromise if the reforms that have been initiated are to continue and yield greater results. The Government of Venezuela welcomes all the recent initiatives in Central America that give the international community an updated frame of reference in which to continue to assist in strengthening peace and democracy in the area. At the Ibero-American Summit in Cartagena last June and at the Eighth Annual Summit of the Rio Group in early September, the President of Venezuela, Mr. Rafael Caldera, reconfirmed Venezuela's commitment to continue to offer Central America the bilateral and multilateral support it needs to this end.

In this context, I should also like to emphasize the importance of the free-trade agreement of the Group of Three, which, together with various bilateral agreements already signed with Central America on preferential terms, has created an unprecedented opportunity for the region's economies.

The Central American situation illustrates that peace demands development. Thus, we are particularly happy to note that today Central America's creative spirit and its peoples' drive are motivating forces in its economic

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and social development and its regional integration. The support role of the United Nations, expressed particularly through its operational activities, deserves the gratitude and support of all Member States. We welcome the change in emphasis proposed by the Central American States themselves for operational activities — from the Special Plan of Economic Cooperation for Central America, an emergency programme, to a sustainable development strategy for the region.

The optimism with which we view the overall situation in Central America and the efforts of the countries of the area to establish stable foundations for its development should not make us forget its aspects suggesting fragility. Peace often still depends to a large extent on economic, social and political reforms, some of them in very delicate areas. There is a great temptation always to suppose that once an armed conflict has been averted or ended, and a negotiating process is under way, reforms can be tackled methodically, when the political or economic circumstances are right or external cooperation provides the means and resources to that end. We believe that this would be a grave error. Nothing can replace the will of each society to take charge of its own destiny in the context of its own realities; the international community can only offer support. While very important, international assistance and cooperation are not, in the final analysis, the critical factor. To create such expectations or to make reforms dependent on them would be counterproductive.

In conclusion, may I reaffirm Venezuela's commitment to Central America and our support for any initiative that preserves or increases, to the extent possible, the support of the United Nations system for the region. We are confident that the General Assembly will also reaffirm its continuing support, and we thank the Secretary-General for his commitment to carry out the difficult mandates we have given him.

Mr. Sardenberg (Brazil) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: The Brazilian delegation is pleased to speak today on agenda item 42.

Central America, that sisterly region, was able to overcome adversity and move into a new era that allowed its peoples to choose democracy and national reconciliation. The problems that persist, far from discouraging us, should strengthen the common determination of all the peoples of the region to continue their efforts.

I should like now to emphasize certain issues related to United Nations activities in support of efforts to strengthen peace.

In El Salvador the evolution of the political process is definitely positive. This year the agreement achieved on 19 May between the Government and the *Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional* (FMLN) on the timetable for the implementation of the most important outstanding agreements is a source of special satisfaction. Issues such as the deployment of the National Civil Police and the demobilization of the National Police, in addition to the land-transfer programme, represent important conditions for national reconciliation. It is of the utmost importance for the Government and the FMLN to continue to make progress in their efforts to achieve the many objectives of the peace agreements.

In Guatemala a number of agreements have been signed: on 10 January, the framework agreement for the resumption of the negotiating process between the Government and the *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca* (URNG); on 29 March, a Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights and an agreement on a timetable for the negotiation of a firm and lasting peace; on 17 June, an Agreement on Resettlement of the Population Groups Uprooted by the Armed Conflict, and later an Agreement on the establishment of a Commission to clarify past human rights violations. This is an indication of the commitment of the Government and the URNG to carry out the ambitious negotiating programme. The United Nations, with the establishment of the Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights, is ready to contribute the kind of assistance required by that country at this most important stage of the peace process. The parties must consolidate the agreements already made by signing an agreement on a firm and lasting peace to mark the culmination of the negotiating process.

Brazil was glad to be able to participate in the Second International Conference of Newly Restored Democracies, held in Managua from 4 to 6 July. The fact that the Government of Nicaragua hosted this meeting reflects its unshakeable determination to achieve democracy through the free will of its people.

In the Declaration of Guácimo, the city that hosted the fifteenth Summit meeting of Central American Presidents, the Presidents reaffirmed that only

cooperation, tolerance, transparency and justice could ensure a stable and firm democracy. Giving continuity to such principles, the Presidents met in Managua for the Central American environmental Summit, on sustainable development, where they were able to give effect to what they had said in Guácimo, by deciding on a national and regional strategy called the Alliance for Sustainable Development in Central America.

In Tegucigalpa important economic, political and social commitments were made at the International Conference on Peace and Development in Central America to complement the efforts initiated at Managua. The measures adopted will contribute to ensuring that the future of Central America outweighs its past.

However, the establishment of democratic regimes in Central America does not in itself guarantee that the social and economic problems of the peoples of the region will be overcome. The Secretary-General states in his report that it is important that the international community continue to maintain and strengthen its support for Central America.

While efforts are continuing to achieve the objectives of peace and democracy, the international community as a whole bears responsibility for the development of the countries of the region. The fact that the sound of gunfire has been replaced by the lights of peace does not mean that interest in Central America should flag, as though the socio-economic problems of the countries of the region had disappeared. We must not lose this opportunity to consolidate the achievements already made and to progress towards stability in Central America.

Brazil is following with interest, and in a spirit of friendship and cooperation, the process taking place in Central America, and is seeking to identify opportunities to intensify trade and deepen the excellent dialogue already under way with the countries of the region. We would like to take an active part in building this new Central America. We are working towards the completion of an internal process that will permit Brazil as soon as possible to become a member of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration. Thus, we are ready to continue to support — within our limited means — and to take part in cooperative efforts by the United Nations and the Organization of American States (OAS). Brazil will continue to take part in the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador until its work is completed. In the field of cooperation, we are creating a Brazilian Fund for Cooperation, within the framework of the OAS, in order to provide means for industrial projects to be implemented rapidly.

This is a historic opportunity for Central America. The consolidation of peace through the free will of the Central American peoples will establish the foundations for a region at peace with itself and dedicated to building a future of prosperity and development through the effort: -d talents of its hard-working people.

Mr. Karsgaard (Canada): The Government of Canada is pleased by the progress made over the past year in Central America in addressing important social, political and economic issues. We particularly commend the citizens and Governments of Central America for their success thus far in dealing with the region's conflicts.

The goal of a firm and lasting peace throughout Central America is attainable. Violent conflicts in Nicaragua and El Salvador, which a decade ago appeared intractable, have been resolved through negotiation and compromise. This would not have been possible without the commitment of the Central American States to the peace process and the invaluable assistance of the United Nations and the Organization of American States, among others.

Canada has long been active in this process, including participation in the United Nations missions to Nicaragua and El Salvador. Earlier this year Canada joined with Mexico, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden to form a Support Group for Nicaragua aimed at assisting that nation in its search for peace and reconciliation. In addition, this past year the Secretary of State for Latin America and Africa, the Honourable Christine Stewart, reaffirmed Canada's political commitment to the region through a number of official visits to Central America. Canada will continue to be an attentive partner for Central America.

We support the efforts of Central American Governments, other Member States and, in particular, the United Nations, all of which are actively supporting negotiations to end the civil conflict in Guatemala. Canada welcomes the progress made by the Guatemalan parties this year in reaching a final peace settlement. In this regard the establishment by the General Assembly this September of the United Nations Mission in Guatemala to monitor and verify the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights is a positive development. We urge the parties to continue and intensify their

negotiations on remaining issues, and we underline the importance of fully implementing the relevant provisions of accords already concluded.

(spoke in French)

Democracy in Central America has grown stronger. In the past year the citizens of Costa Rica, Honduras, Panama and El Salvador have elected new national Governments. The elections this spring in El Salvador represented a key step in strengthening democracy in that country. We welcome the commitment by both the new Government and the FMLN to the full implementation of the remaining elements in the peace accords. The United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) has played and continues to play an essential role in this regard. Its contribution to the transitional period to peace and democracy in El Salvador has been essential and shows the United Nations at its best. As the Mission completes its activities, we welcome the intention of the Secretary-General to keep the United Nations fully engaged in consolidating peace and democracy in El Salvador.

An equally important development in strengthening democracy is the growing influence of civil society and its institutions in Central America. A vibrant democracy requires the full and energetic participation of civil society.

While advances have been made towards peace and democracy, the Government of Canada cannot pass over in silence the question of freedom in Central America. Peace and democracy can flourish only if there is a deep commitment to respect for human rights. We welcome the establishment in recent years of national human rights commissions and human rights ombudsmen by several countries in Central America. These are positive steps. However, the instruments of Government, particularly those pertaining to law enforcement, must be improved to ensure that human rights are fully respected.

(spoke in English)

Regarding the development of Central America, Canada applauds the efforts of the Central American Governments to promote social and economic development on a regional basis. Evidence of this commitment to a regional response to these important themes includes the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America signed this October in Nicaragua. We support Central America's plans for economic integration, which should enhance the region's wealth and stability.

The international community has played and must continue to play an important role in promoting peace, strengthening democratic institutions and encouraging economic growth in Central America. The United Nations, the Organization of American States and individual countries have all made significant contributions to this end. Yet until the root causes of conflict — poverty, injustice and oppression — are eradicated, there can be no firm base for peace, democracy and freedom. While the international community can assist, it is the strength and resolve of the people and the Governments of Central America that will ensure that these ideals are achieved.

Mr. Laing (Belize): The delegation of Belize is most honoured to participate in this critically important annual debate on "The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development".

Central America is one of the world's places of passage. As such, the isthmus shares with many straits and strategic islands, and with some horns and capes, a certain dangerous glamour, as all and sundry seek to venture there for purposes good and ill. Like the Fertile Crescent, for all its limited size, Central America has had a more cosmic significance in the annals of this planet. It was the centre of one of the world's major civilizations. The filigree strip of earth has been both a fragile barrier and also a link between East and West. In ancient times it was the bridge from north to south for peoples seeking new homes. In the past quarter century, it has been the passageway for a substantial migration to the north.

Most poignantly, during this same period proponents of the two major antagonistic dogmas and ideologies of this century have waged a major struggle in our region for recognition and domination. Perhaps all that I have mentioned has not been inevitable, but evidently geostrategic and ecological factors must have played a major part in those developments.

At any rate, as noted in last month's report of the Secretary-General, Central America has been a region where peace did not prevail. Neither did freedom, democracy and development. This bore a direct relationship to the struggle to which I have referred.

The Assembly is well aware of and has often expressed concern about the devastation to the region and its infrastructures, the presence and use of offensive

weapons, especially by inordinately large military establishments, the protracted and endemic conflagrations, the displacement and involuntary migration of populations and the widespread economic retardation.

Happily, as a result of the new dynamic in international relations, there has been a marked strengthening of regional and national peace, as described in the Secretary-General's report. We are gratified to observe how, for instance, there has been considerable improvement in the situation of displaced persons and a significant trend towards the demobilization of members of the armed forces and their re-integration into civilian life.

Equally gratifying have been the tangible expressions of the commitment to the strengthening of democratic institutions and human rights. States have subscribed to conventions for the protection of human rights, domestic human rights agencies have been established and there have been many other efforts made in good faith to recreate and create modern structures of orderly civil society. Fortunately, the improvement of the situation of displaced persons has recently been treated as an aspect of the region-wide and nation-wide drives to eradicate poverty.

Most impressive has been the extraordinary cooperation evinced between the governments of the region. After the long dormancy of the institutions for regional economic integration, we now observe their reawakening. We are witnessing the strengthening of the Central American Bank for Economic Integration. We observe dedicated bureaucrats meeting with a sense of purpose. Even foreign ministers are participating in technical meetings in the region and abroad, including such meetings here at the United Nations. Meetings with donors on such issues as displaced persons are in fact brainstorming sessions on regional, national and local development and cooperation. Popular regional institutions have swung into action. Most notable of these is the Central American Parliament. The region's unique tradition of establishing multilateral judicial institutions has been revived with the Central American Court of Justice. Functional cooperation abounds, with such schemes and plans as those for disaster relief, electrical connections and joint purchasing of pharmaceuticals.

This cooperation and integration have fully engaged the attention of the region's supreme leadership. There have been a number of notable summit meetings leading up to two major events last month: the Managua summit on the new alliance for sustainable development and the Tegucigalpa International Conference on Peace and Development.

Since the region's woes were so closely related to the play of global power, values and ideologies, it is not inappropriate that the region has received substantial extraregional cooperation in its efforts at peace-building, cooperation and integration. The Secretary-General's report describes the progress of the San José Agreement with the European Union, the strengthening of economic relations with the nations of South America, the continued technical advice and support of the multilateral financial institutions, notably assistance from the Inter-American Development Bank with regard to regional electric power, and the continuing cooperation of the Organization of American States. We should also note the recent agreement with the various States of the wider Caribbean to establish an association of Caribbean States.

It would be folly to predict the future of the region. However, this delegation is impressed with the region's ability to be in the vanguard. Blessed with impressive ecological assets, even in the midst of significant blight, Central America has taken a giant and progressive step in establishing the Alliance for Sustainable Development. It is hoped that that entity will establish firm links with cognate institutions elsewhere, including bodies within the United Nations system. We also note the rapidity with which Central America has begun to take steps to translate into action, with United Nations collaboration, a sustainable human development strategy. In both of these matters, the region is set to be a model for other regions. The Republic of Nicaragua also demonstrated that regional countries can be role models when it successfully orchestrated the recent International Conference for New and Restored Democracies. One may now legitimately anticipate a major regional conference on peace, investment and development.

Above all, my delegation anticipates that, in the future, the inherent interdependency of the States of our small fragile isthmus will make increasing cooperation the watchword.

Even though Belize did not experience some of the traumas of its neighbours, it became evident to this Assembly long ago that Belize suffers from the fallout of the conflagration on the isthmus. For instance, the heavy burden of accommodating the 15 per cent of the population who are displaced persons from our Central American neighbours. Hence, as our Prime Minister recently said at the Tegucigalpa Conference, we feel that

we have a stake in the peace and stability of Central America. This Assembly has, therefore, stressed that Belize should participate fully in the process of building peace, democracy, freedom and development. As the years and the months have passed, it has been increasingly recognized that the democratic institutions, human rights traditions and bilingualism of Belize are assets of inestimable value for the entire neighbourhood. Belize has therefore actively participated in many aspects of the process of cooperation and integration. This includes those involving the supreme leadership of the region.

Although Belize has not always been asked to be a full participant, its involvement in this process is patently indispensable to all. Obviously, disasters and narcotics trafficking respect no boundaries. Regional economic planning cannot acknowledge imaginary language barriers. Economies of scale and geographical realities justify the joint or complementary production and marketing of goods. They are also the rationale for such initiatives as the joint purchase of pharmaceuticals and the exchange of electric power. In negotiations and relations between extraregional actors, the larger the number of regional State actors, the greater the necessary critical mass. Hence, this delegation warmly welcomes the statement made recently by the European Union in the course of the Assembly's general debate that since the purpose of the San José Agreement is to achieve peace and stability in the region, the Union intends in the future to invite Belize to its meetings with Central America as an observer.

What we are saying is that Belize is an inextricable and organic part of the region just as much as its population from Africa, Europe, the Caribbean and elsewhere is indistinguishable from that of the rest of the area with which there are many family ties. Besides, Belize is the most centrally located area in Central America and the wider Caribbean. My delegation suspects that as regions inevitably expand the size of their groupings, it will be realized that Belize is indispensable to the rest of Central America, as a link with the English-speaking Caribbean.

I will conclude on the same note of peace on which I began. For far too long, and largely owing to circumstances beyond our control, Central America has been a victim of an absence of peace. As peace begins to blossom within the individual States of the region, we must pay keen attention to the examples set by the wider international community. Cold wars have significantly abated. Major conflagrations in other regions have been extinguished or dispersed.

In some other regions, neighbours have made giant strides towards bilateral and regional peace. Why, then, should we Central Americans waste time in perpetuating past quarrels, as our Prime Minister, Mr. Esquivel recently remarked? Instead, we are confident that, guided by examples from other regions, all of us will act with wisdom in the dynamic and progressive task of eviscerating conflict, respecting territorial integrity and erecting enduring regional structures for the welfare of our peoples: collaborating for the greater glory of our fragile, filigree isthmus.

Mr. Cardenas (Argentina) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: Once more my delegation wishes to express its abiding interest in a subject involving the region and its satisfaction at having an opportunity to speak on this item on the situation in Central America, which the General Assembly has been considering since 1987, an item we view as extremely relevant.

For decades Central America has lived in the wake of conflicts and violence, beset by civil wars and confrontations which were in some way provoked by the cold war. The situation became so grave that with the end of the 1980s in Central America we had about two million refugees and displaced persons, no more nor less than 10 per cent of its total population. However, starting with the Esquipulas Agreement in 1987 the region has been working tirelessly to consolidate peace and give priority to human development. That means fighting poverty, helping refugees and displaced persons and working to achieve development.

With the cooperation and assistance of the international community, together with the efforts of the region itself, we can now say that the outcome is encouraging. As the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) states in the report on human development, by 1994 some 210,000 refugees have returned to their homes and almost 500,000 Central Americans have received financial assistance designed to rebuild their lives and their communities.

As an update we have read the excellent report (A/49/489) presented by the Secretary-General dated 7 October 1994, which gives a detailed description of the evolution of the peace process and consolidation of democracy in the region as a whole, as well as the present situation of agreements arrived at in each specific country.

My country has no doubt that the main pillars for any society are peace, democracy, freedom, respect for human rights and development and that these become strengthened in an environment of well-being with a modicum of social and economic stability, which provides the proper framework to ensure that these pillars become truly effective. The same is true for the values of peace and democracy as integral parts of the broader concept of the notion of security. In the quest for these goals the international community, as we have said, has continued to be aware of the fact that the Central American region is emerging from difficult times of conflict, from a decade in which it had to deal with complex situations that entailed the painful consequences known to all.

It is no surprise therefore that the human development indices as issued by the United Nations Development Programme in recent years show a regrettable reduction in development levels in the region. But we also see with renewed hope that those years of conflict and mistrust have been left behind and replaced by accords and agreements that have been signed and carried out. Democratic elections, furthermore, have become the rule rather than the exception. Thus, as stated by the Secretary-General,

> "The Central American countries have demonstrated their commitment to the strengthening of democratic institutions." *(A/49/489, para. 6)*

To wit, four major countries of the region — Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Panama — have held free democratic elections recently. On this basis we have undertaken efforts in various multilateral cooperative mechanisms — the United Nations, the Organization of American States (OAS) and international financial institutions — in order to find formulas for external cooperation and coordination, bearing in mind that the priority is to help the region with its institutional reconstruction and economic development.

For example, we have supported the efforts of the Nicaraguan people to strengthen peace and endorsed special treatment for Nicaragua in order to ensure that the international community and international financial institutions will contribute to the objective of restoring and deepening democracy in that country.

In the context of this cooperation, my country has entered into specific commitments with the Republic of Nicaragua with regard to various projects of technical cooperation between the two countries. Among the areas on which these cooperation projects will focus are: training human resources, agriculture, forestry, fishing and energy. Argentina and Nicaragua on 5 January 1993 signed an agreement on cancelling the Nicaraguan debt, as one more contribution to the economic assistance of a brother people. My country wishes to repeat that it supports the continuation of the significant Nicaraguan efforts to improve guarantees of the right to property, which is indispensable to foster the sustainable development of any country.

My country followed closely the process that led to the signing of the peace agreements between the Government of El Salvador and the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front. We have also taken an active part in the work of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL) both with military personnel, some of whom are still working in the country, and with civilian personnel as observers in the elections in March and April this year.

Argentina has also taken an active part in the peace process in Guatemala, supporting the deployment of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA), in the search for a lasting solution in the process of strengthening democracy in that country, and we intend to commit Argentinian personnel to that end.

It is clear that our cooperation in solidarity has been demonstrated with this region in all fields where it seems necessary — from financial, multilateral and bilateral support, which can mobilize investment and therefore foster growth, to the physical presence of the Argentine on Central American soil cooperating there with the United Nations.

In this context, I wish to highlight the Argentine Fund of Horizontal Cooperation, a principal instrument set up by the Argentine Foreign Office and funded from our own resources to provide technical cooperation in priority areas for beneficiary countries. The implementation of this programme in Central America was carried out swiftly and effectively, as an expression of the political will of the Government of Argentina to enhance its relations with the region and cooperate in its economic and institutional development.

That is the spirit in which we reiterate our active commitment to work with Central America in its efforts at cooperation and integration in the region, to which we

attach the highest importance. Central America is a region that has been able to shed violence and wishes to live in harmony and to grow and develop. Today it is endeavouring to consolidate peace. For all those reasons it looks to the future with renewed hope, as it engaged in a healthy exercise of deepening reconciliation.

Mr. Henze (Germany) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I have the honour to speak in this debate on the situation in Central America on behalf of the European Union and Austria.

This year we commemorate the tenth anniversary of the San José process. Throughout the decade, the dialogue between Europe and Central America within the framework of this process has been aimed at promoting peace, democracy, reconciliation and development in Central America. On the basis of the Esquipulas peace initiative, it proved possible to put an end to the armed conflicts in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Current developments in those two countries are encouraging. We can now hope that the peace negotiations in Guatemala, which were resumed after a brief impasse, will also come to a successful conclusion.

The European Union and Austria are determined to pursue dialogue and cooperation with the Central American countries and to support those countries' own efforts. The fact that four countries have held democratic and free elections since the last annual session of the General Assembly is clear evidence of the progress made towards strengthening democracy in Central America.

The European Union and Austria welcome the progress achieved in strengthening peace and national reconciliation in Nicaragua. It marks the beginning of constructive cooperation between the political parties within Parliament that has allowed, among other things, the adoption of new legislation on the army as an important step towards control of that institution by the constitutional civilian authorities. We highly appreciate the good offices of the Organization of American States, which have contributed to this tangible progress in Nicaragua. Nevertheless, the persistent unrest in many parts of the country, in particular in the north, and the deterioration of the social and economic conditions of the poorest strata of the population highlight the need to increase efforts to promote development, reconciliation and peace. We are committed to maintaining our support for the peace process in that country.

The peace process in El Salvador has been a notable success. We commend both parties for their realism and readiness to compromise. We applaud the efforts of the international community, in particular the United Nations, its Secretary-General and the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL). The European Union has supported the peace process since its inception and will continue to do so in the future.

We welcome the determination of both parties involved to implement the Peace Accords. Many aspects of these Accords, however, remain to be fulfilled, in particular those relating to the armed forces and public security, especially the full deployment of the National Civil Police and the dismantling of the National Police. Institutional reforms in the judicial sector are making slow headway, as are compliance with the recommendations of the Commission on the Truth and, more importantly, the establishment of reintegration programmes, particularly the land-transfer programme. The European Union has contributed to the reintegration of former combatants by funding important projects and supporting the training of the new National Civil Police.

Although the human rights situation has improved, much remains to be done. In this connection, we are extremely concerned by the ongoing activities of illegal armed groups linked to the security apparatus.

The European Union hails the Security Council's decision to extend the mandate of ONUSAL one last time, to 30 April 1995. We welcome the Secretary-General's intention to consider how the United Nations might carry out its remaining verification obligations in the future.

Bearing in mind the obvious successes of the Central American peace process in Nicaragua and El Salvador, the European Union notes with satisfaction the progress achieved this year in the peace process in Guatemala. The signing of five agreements since the beginning of the year — affecting, *inter alia*, such sensitive issues as human rights, the resettlement of the displaced population and the establishment of a commission to investigate human rights abuses and acts of violence perpetrated in the past — constitutes a very positive step forward. We hope that both parties will honour the commitments they have undertaken. Negotiations have recently resumed following a three-month deadlock. The European Union urges both sides to demonstrate the flexibility necessary for the successful outcome of these negotiations. The European Union particularly welcomes the fact that both parties have asked the United Nations to organize a mission to verify the implementation of the

Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights without waiting for the official ratification of the peace accord. We welcome the fact that the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights and of Compliance with the Commitments of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA), a Mission which the General Assembly established to verify that Agreement, has now begun its work in the field.

The European Union is deeply concerned by the fact that progress made in the peace process to date has not helped to improve the human rights situation in Guatemala, an issue to which the European Union attaches great importance. Resolute action, backed by the effective administration of justice, must be taken to ensure that human rights abuses do not go unpunished. In this process, it is of the highest importance to ensure that the army be under the control of the civilian authorities.

The era of military tensions in Central America is coming to a close. In this respect, we welcome the steps taken by some countries to reduce their military forces and hope that other countries of the region will do the same. Throughout the entire San José process, the European Union has emphasized the vital importance of respect for human rights in achieving peaceful development at the national and international levels. We welcome the progress made in this area. The creation and strengthening throughout the region of human rights organizations, which are closely monitoring Government leaders' commitments to protecting human rights, bear witness to this positive development. In recent years, the European Union has supported many specific projects with a view to strengthening democratization and respect for human rights in Central America. The cornerstone of these efforts is the multi-annual programme to promote human rights, which was adopted by the European Union and the Central American countries in a solemn ceremony at the Lisbon Conference in February 1992.

The European Union welcomes the efforts designed to further Central American integration. These efforts are reflected, in particular, in the Tegucigalpa Protocol, which, *inter alia*, established the Central American Integration System, the Central American Parliament and the Central American Court of Justice, as well as in the Guatemala Protocol, in which the Central American Presidents laid the foundations for economic integration. This economic integration will be strengthened through coordination and harmonization of the economic policies of the participating countries. Its final objective is the establishment of a Central American economic union. The high growth rates of interregional trade witnessed since the second half of the 1980s are telling evidence of the region's progressive economic integration.

The European Union reaffirms its determination to continue to support this process as well as the new efforts to energize the overall development of Central America which recently were announced at the Guácimo Summit in Costa Rica; the Central American Environmental Summit for Sustainable Development; in Managua; and the International Conference on Peace and Development in Central America in Tegucigalpa. The European Union welcomes the initiative of the Central American States in establishing the Alliance for Sustainable Development. In so doing, those States made use of the impetus provided by the success of the peace process to undertake new, energetic efforts to promote development and integration. The European Union also supports the joint struggle of the Central American countries against drug trafficking and their efforts to protect the environment.

The San Salvador Agreement signed last year at the ministerial meeting between the European Union and Central America last year marked the beginning of a new era of redoubled cooperation. This so-called Third Generation Agreement for cooperation opens a new stage in the relations between our two regions. Our cooperation now encompasses areas such as science and technology, the environment and social development, direct foreign investment and trade policy. I should like to recall that the European Union and its member States are jointly the main donors in the framework of cooperation to help the region. During the period from 1991 to 1995 the assistance of the European Union will amount to 2.75 billion ECUs — not counting the bilateral cooperation by its members.

Although much remains to be done, there has been definite progress in the overall situation in Central America since last year. In this respect, I wish to thank the Secretary-General in particular for his productive work in the region. His efforts have been essential to the success achieved over the past few years.

The President *(interpretation from French)*: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to inform members of the Assembly that in order to allow the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee to review the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/49/L.35, action on the draft

resolution will be taken at a later date, to be announced in the *Journal*.

Agenda item 40

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/49/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/49/636)

The President *(interpretation from French):* I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate agenda item 40 be closed in half an hour.

If there is no objection, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees to that proposal.

It was so decided.

The President *(interpretation from French):* I therefore request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe themselves as soon as possible.

I now call on Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé of Senegal, who will speak in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Cissé (Senegal), Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of Palestinian People *(interpretation from French)*: It is a pleasure for me, in my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and on my own behalf, to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly. We are confident that, with your experience, your thorough knowledge of the complex issues at hand and your diplomatic skills, you will successfully guide the deliberations on the agenda item.

Today the world is being transformed right before our eyes. The developments that are taking place everywhere prove this and open up prospects that are new and full of hope but that, unfortunately, are at the same time fragile and not easy to deal with. This change is particularly evident in the Middle East, where for a long time a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict has been sought. Today, fortunately, the hope of seeing courage and political wisdom triumph is coming to the fore. Despite the tragic events of the last few weeks, which have once again demonstrated the fragility of the peace process, it is now more important than ever that these hopes not be dashed.

Last year we paid tribute to the wisdom and political realism of the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Yasser Arafat, the Prime Minister of Israel, Yitzhak Rabin, and the Foreign Minister of Israel, Shimon Peres, on the historic signing of the Declaration of Principles. This year I want to congratulate them on the well-deserved recognition of their remarkable accomplishments with the award of the Nobel Peace Prize.

The progress towards peace is undeniable. The three-year-old peace process, which began at Madrid in October 1991, is advancing. Our Committee welcomes the progress made by the parties in various areas, as well as by the determination with which they have set out on the road to peace despite repeated setbacks.

The Committee welcomed the signing on 4 May last of the Israeli-PLO Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, which led to the withdrawal of Israeli troops from those areas, the deployment of the first Palestinian police force, the return after many years of exile of Chairman Arafat and other Palestinian leaders to the Gaza Strip and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority.

Further, the Committee noted the signing of the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities and the beginnings of Palestinian self-government in a number of areas in the West Bank. The Committee supported these developments, which hold promise for a comprehensive, just and peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights.

The signing of the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan was also bound to have a positive effect throughout the region. It is a clear sign that the process of peace in the Middle East is accelerating. We hope that this progress will encourage other parties in the region to move ahead in their respective areas of negotiations. We are also aware that the road the parties have set out upon is thorny and fraught with difficulties.

With a view to consolidating peace, guaranteeing economic development and improving living conditions,

the Committee has expressed the hope that the donor community will honour its commitments and take the necessary measures as a matter of urgency. The Committee has undertaken activities to promote this effort. The Committee has also noted with interest the adoption of the Casablanca Declaration by the participants in the recent Middle East/North Africa Economic Summit. Such meetings help improve the economic climate and as a result the political climate, in the entire region.

For almost 20 years the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People has been concerned with all aspects of the question of Palestine, and it has consistently held the view that a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement must be based on respect for Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973); on Israel's withdrawal from all Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, and from other occupied Arab territories; on respect for the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally recognized boundaries; and on the recognition and exercise of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, particularly its right to self-determination. Those are key principles without which there can be no lasting solution, not only to the question of Palestine, but, above all, to a whole range of regional problems. Today the question of Palestine remains the core issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and still awaits a final resolution. A great deal remains to be done. Hence, great patience will be required of the parties in order to bring about, with the support of the international community, a truly just solution to the problem.

In accordance with its mandate, the Committee has cooperated in international efforts to promote the implementation of the Declaration of Principles, and has tried to mobilize international support for and assistance to the Palestinian people during the transitional period. On behalf of the Committee, I thank those States which have supported its work and have facilitated the organization of events by providing venues and participating in the debates.

In 1994 the Committee held a very productive symposium for North American non-governmental organizations in Toronto, Canada; an interesting seminar in Paris on Palestinian trade and investment needs; and a symposium of European non-governmental organizations and a meeting of international non-governmental organizations in Geneva. A seminar and non-governmental-organization symposium for the Latin American and Caribbean region is scheduled to be held next March in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

These events are held with the participation of prominent Palestinian and Israeli personalities, experts from various regions, representatives of donor countries and other governmental and intergovernmental entities, organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations involved in activity on behalf of the Palestinian people. They have proved, if proof were needed, that the Committee can play a valuable role as a forum for dialogue, exchange of information, mobilization of public opinion and action in support of peace efforts, the exercise of Palestinian rights and Palestinian socio-economic development.

It was the combined efforts of the United Nations, including the Committee, as well as other parties, that made the Madrid peace process a reality. And it was the General Assembly's committed support and endorsement that allowed the parties to move forward despite numerous obstacles and some setbacks.

The negotiations are proceeding, but we should not ignore the serious problems still awaiting resolution in the West Bank, including Jerusalem, and in the Gaza Strip, which still jeopardize the peace process. Developments during the transitional period, when the Palestinians are assuming their powers and responsibilities, are a measure of what is yet to be accomplished by the parties and by the international community. On several occasions we have voiced our concern at deadly acts of violence aimed at derailing the peace process. Other matters, too, cause great concern: the continued establishment of settlements in the occupied territory, as well as in and around Jerusalem; the repeated closures of the territory; the destruction of housing and other acts of collective punishment; and the continued imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians under harsh conditions. The Committee believes that the Fourth Geneva Convention must be applied to all the Palestinian territories, and that these activities by Israel, which are in contravention of its obligations under the Convention, should be stopped. This would constitute an important confidence-building measure which would help create an atmosphere more conducive to peace.

Last year the General Assembly, in resolution 48/158 A, reaffirmed that the United Nations had a permanent responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until the question was resolved in all its aspects in a satisfactory manner in accordance with international legitimacy. This year, during the general debate, many delegations reaffirmed this point of view before the General Assembly, stating that the United Nations must

continue to play a role in the peace process, remain seized of the matter and closely monitor the developments on the ground. Delegations also expressed their belief that the United Nations should take on a new role involving the channelling of economic and other forms of assistance to the Palestinians.

In this respect, the Committee welcomed the steps taken by the Secretary-General in support of the peace process, particularly through the appointment of the Special Coordinator to act as a focal point for all United Nations economic, social and other assistance to the Palestinians. The disastrous economic situation in the Gaza Strip, with its concomitant tensions and instability, points up the urgent need for international assistance to generate employment, ameliorate living conditions and provide the indispensable foundation for long-term economic development, without which peace there can be only a precarious peace.

Our Committee believes that as the peace process develops it must be accompanied by a considerable effort on the part of the international community to address the various critical problems involved in the transition to Palestinian autonomy, including unresolved political questions, the rights of the Palestinian people, and the socio-economic situation. The Committee, in the period ahead, will continue to make adjustments in its programme of work to reflect the realities in the region and constantly to make a useful contribution to the international endeavours aimed at bringing about a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the question of Palestine in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions. We shall also continue to monitor closely the developments on the ground, promote the full implementation of the agreements reached by the parties and urge the mobilization of the necessary international assistance for the Palestinian people.

Given the new situation created by the signing of the Declaration of Principles and other milestone agreements, and taking into account the evolution of the Committee's approach and its programme of work, the Committee invites all those Member States that support its objectives and activities but have not thus far participated in its work to join it in this important and much-needed effort. This will help to enhance the role played by the United Nations in general and the Assembly in particular in the promotion of peace and stability in the region during this crucial and sensitive transitional period.

The President (*interpretation from French*): I now call on the representative of Malta, Mr. Joseph Cassar, in his capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to introduce the Committee's report (A/49/35).

Mr. Cassar (Malta) (Rapporteur of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People): It is an honour for me, in my capacity as Rapporteur, to present to the General Assembly the report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People covering its work during the past year (A/49/35).

In 1994 the Committee, under the able guidance of its Chairman, Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, carried out its mandate in conformity with the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. The report covers the significant developments concerning the question of Palestine and the activities of the Committee in the year since the last report, taking into account the new situation created by the peace process, which the Committee has welcomed and endeavoured to promote.

The introduction to the report is contained in chapter I and outlines the constructive position taken by the Committee with regard to the new situation, as well as the Committee's main concerns.

Chapters II and III are procedural and summarize the respective mandates of the Committee, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the Department of Public Information, and give information on the Committee's organization of work.

Chapter IV reviews the significant developments with regard to the peace process, as well as in the occupied Palestinian territories. The Committee has welcomed the signing by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) of a series of important bilateral agreements in implementation of the Declaration of Principles of 13 September 1993, in particular the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area of May 1994 and the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities of August 1994 concerning the West Bank. The Committee noted with satisfaction the changes that had taken place on the ground, such as the withdrawal of Israeli military forces, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and the transfer to it of various powers and responsibilities, the establishment of a Palestinian police force and the release by Israel of 5,000 Palestinian prisoners.

The Committee was pleased to note that Chairman Yasser Arafat had returned to the Gaza Strip to assume the leadership of the Palestinian Authority and that other leaders had also been allowed to return. The Committee has also noted that despite many obstacles and delays, negotiations have started between Israel and the PLO on the issue of Palestinian elections and on the extension of the self-government arrangements to the rest of the West Bank, and hopes that this process will continue speedily. The Committee also hopes that all aspects of the agreements already reached will be implemented. The Committee has also taken note of the treaty of peace between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, signed on 26 October 1994, and has expressed the hope that it will lead to rapid progress in the negotiations with the other parties to the conflict.

However, despite these positive developments, the Committee was alarmed by the repeated violent incidents aimed at derailing the peace process, including the massacre of Palestinian worshippers at the Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron in February 1994 and subsequent incidents which have highlighted the fragility of the peace process and the awesome difficulties it confronts. The Committee has expressed concern at the continuation of Israeli policies such as the expansion of settlements, repeated closures of the occupied territories and the consequent isolation of East Jerusalem, the imposition of collective punishments, and other practices which aggravate tensions and jeopardize the peace process. The Committee has called for full respect for the Fourth Geneva Convention by Israel as the occupying Power, as well as full implementation of Security Council resolution 904 (1994).

The Committee has been greatly concerned by the disastrous economic situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly the Gaza Strip, after 27 years of occupation, and has endeavoured to promote international assistance for development, which is universally recognized as essential for the achievement of peace. In this regard, the Committee has welcomed with appreciation the appointment of a Special Coordinator by the Secretary-General in the occupied territory to act as a focal point for all United Nations economic, social and other assistance to Palestinians.

Chapter V of the report provides a detailed overview of the various activities of the Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 48/158 A and B. The Committee closely monitored the situation on the ground and supported international action following the Hebron massacre through a letter addressed by the Chairman to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, as well as appropriate action within the Council. The Committee, through its Chairman, was also represented at meetings of various intergovernmental organizations and presented its objectives and activities. Further, the Committee followed closely, and some of its members participated as necessary in, meetings of United Nations bodies and agencies, the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and intergovernmental organizations, at which various statements, resolutions and communiqués relevant to this issue were adopted.

As the Chairman has already reported, the Committee sponsored a seminar in Paris on Palestinian trade and investment needs; non-governmental organizations symposiums in Toronto and Geneva for the North American and European regions, respectively; as well as an international meeting of non-governmental organizations. The Committee was encouraged by the active participation in these activities of prominent political personalities, parliamentarians, policy makers and other experts, including Israelis and Palestinians. The Committee believes that these meetings make a positive contribution to peace efforts by providing a forum for a balanced and constructive discussion of the most important issues, including those related to the current situation and the challenges confronting Palestinians during the transitional period. Wishing to involve additional non-governmental organizations in its work, particularly those active in the field of development and humanitarian relief, the Committee also established a set of revised criteria for participation by non-governmental organizations in its activities.

Finally, the report describes very briefly the many activities of the Division for Palestinian Rights of the United Nations Secretariat in the field of research, monitoring and publications, and action taken for the establishment of a computer-based information system on the question of Palestine. It also describes the observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.

Chapter VI of the report covers the work of the Department of Public Information in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/158 C, including the publications and audiovisual activities of that Department, as well as the journalists' encounters and news missions to the area.

Chapter VII, the last chapter, contains the Committee's recommendations. The Committee believes that these recommendations, which take fully into account the new situation and are intended to make a positive contribution to it, are practical and constructive, and it hopes that they will be adopted by the General Assembly by an overwhelming majority as in the past.

The Committee reaffirms that the United Nations has a continuing responsibility with respect to the question of Palestine until a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement is reached, and believes that the involvement of the United Nations in the peace process is essential for its successful outcome. The Committee also believes that its own role, as the General Assembly body established to deal with the question of Palestine, continues to be useful and necessary until a satisfactory final settlement is achieved.

The Committee reaffirms that such a settlement must be based on resolution 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the withdrawal of Israel from the Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and other Arab territories occupied since 1967, and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its inalienable rights, in particular the right to self-determination. While remaining firm on this position of principle, the Committee has continued to make adjustments in its approach and programme of work in order to contribute concretely to promoting the implementation of the agreements reached and to mobilize international assistance to the Palestinian people.

The Committee wishes to express its great appreciation to those States which have supported its work and have facilitated the organization of events held under the auspices of the Committee. It considers that a broadening of its membership to include countries that support its objectives but have not hitherto participated in its work would greatly enhance the contribution of the General Assembly to promoting peace at this important stage.

The Committee considers that its seminars on economic and social issues confronting Palestinians have been particularly useful and it has stressed the value of its role as a catalyst in developing a network of non-governmental organizations active in solidarity activities as well as development assistance in support of the Palestinian people. Noting with appreciation the increasing interest and participation of Governments, particularly those of donor countries, United Nations organizations and agencies and others in these events, the Committee has expressed the intention to continue its programme of meetings in various regions in the coming year and to structure its programme for maximum usefulness.

Also, in the light of the new situation on the ground and the recognized need of continued United Nations involvement in the question of Palestine, the Committee will consider holding an event in the territory under Palestinian authority to address aspects of the transitional period.

Further, the Committee has emphasized the essential contribution of the Division for Palestinian Rights as a centre for research, monitoring, the preparation of studies and the collection and dissemination of information on all issues related to the question of Palestine. It has noted with satisfaction the initial establishment of the United Nations computer-based information system on the question of Palestine — UNISPAL — and has called for cooperation by all concerned with the Division in order to maximize the usefulness of the system.

The Committee also considers that the Special Information Programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information is useful in raising the international community's awareness of the complexities of the question and the situation in the Middle East in general. The Committee believes that the programme is contributing effectively to an atmosphere conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process.

In conclusion, the Committee has expressed its determination to continue to strive to achieve maximum effectiveness in the implementation of its mandate and to adjust its programme in the light of developments, in order to continue to contribute, to the extent possible, to the realization of the common United Nations objective of achieving a just and lasting solution of the question of Palestine. The Committee calls on all Member States to support it in this essential endeavour.

Mr. Kaddoumi (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Mr. President, it gives me great pleasure to begin my statement by congratulating you on your election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. I wish you every success in conducting the Assembly's work and in achieving its desired goals. In electing you, the General Assembly has chosen a man of wisdom and experience and, in particular, a representative of the aspirations and the struggles of the peoples of Africa.

I should like also to express our deep appreciation to Mr. Insanally, the President of the forty-eighth session of the Assembly, for having presided so ably and successfully over that session.

I should like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General, Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, for his efforts in discharging his functions and vast international responsibilities.

Permit me also to express our appreciation of the efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chairman, Ambassador Kéba Birane Cissé, the representative of the friendly country of Senegal.

This session of the General Assembly takes place at the threshold of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. That may be an occasion for world leaders to meet and seriously deliberate on the political, economic and social conditions prevailing in the world today after the disappearance of the old world order. It is hoped that in so doing they will respond to the need for a new world of stability, justice, security and well-being for all peoples. The building of such a new world order will require a clear far-sighted vision, profound new thinking and a strong will to overcome the problems and difficulties that beset humanity in the form of ethnic conflicts, extremism, bigotry and intolerance, civil wars, social ills and poor living conditions. There is a need for international relations to be based on the equality that is indispensable for maintaining political stability and contributing to the resolution of the problems of underdevelopment and poverty. The Palestine Liberation Organization is very happy to make its modest contribution to the preparations for this great occasion next year.

Over and above what it means to all peoples of the world, the United Nations, to us, is the foster parent of the Palestinian cause. The General Assembly has been considering the question of Palestine ever since the United Nations came into being. It recommended the partition of Palestine into two States, one Arab and one Jewish. Israel was established, while our Arab State has yet to be established on the land of Palestine. The General Assembly of the United Nations has affirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including, in particular, the right to self-determination without external interference and the right to live in peace, independence and freedom. It also affirmed the right of the Palestinian human being to return to his homeland and to his home and his right to compensation for what he suffered as a result of his displacement from his homeland.

Since 1947, the United Nations has been dealing with the question of Palestine, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, through the General Assembly, the Security Council and other organs and specialized agencies, as well as through its economic and social assistance programmes and the efforts of its Secretaries-General and international envoys. The United Nations has, therefore, an abiding responsibility towards the question of Palestine, a legal, political and moral responsibility which the United Nations should continue to shoulder until a just solution is reached for the question of Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict in accordance with the resolutions of international legality. The United Nations has an important — indeed an essential — role to play at this current stage in bringing the peace process to a successful conclusion on all tracks by actively participating in the political efforts and by providing economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people so that they may build their national institutions and establish their independent State.

As we speak on the question of Palestine, we ought to make an evaluation of the current peace process, which began in Madrid on the initiative announced on 6 March 1991 by the former President of the United States, Mr. George Bush. After lengthy negotiations in Washington at which little progress was made, negotiations were held at Oslo. Anxious to move the peace process from its deadlock, which had lasted for 22 months, the Palestine Liberation Organization agreed to the Declaration of Principles in order to bring back momentum and dynamism to the skilled process, which was simply marking time. By so doing, the Palestine Liberation Organization hoped to breach the thick wall of settlement so that a new ray of hope might come through.

That agreement was an important development in the situation in the Middle East as a whole. The war had begun by Palestine, and peace must begin by Palestine. Our Palestinian people, the peoples of the region and the whole world felt optimistic about those steps and regarded them as the beginning of a just solution to the question of Palestine and of a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East region.

Following the signature of the Agreement on the Declaration of Principles, the United States convened an international conference to support the Middle East peace process in which many States participated and committed

themselves to providing $2.4 billion of aid over the next five years.

We, for our part, have established the Palestinian Council for Development and Reconstruction (PACDAR) to oversee international aid in cooperation and coordination with the donor countries and international organizations. The Secretary-General of the United Nations has appointed Mr. Terry Larsen as United Nations Coordinator in the occupied Palestinian territory, and we thank him for that.

The positive impact of these international moves has strengthened the Palestinian people's hope for a new and better situation that would put behind them the tragic consequences of the long years of Israeli occupation which resulted in the destruction of their economic, political and social infrastructures.

The Declaration of Principles was followed by agreements to implement its provisions. It was also followed by the Palestinian Authority's assumption of some of its responsibilities in the fields and areas prescribed therein. The Declaration of Principles established a transitional period of five years and provided that Israel would first withdraw from Gaza and Jericho and then redeploy its forces stationed in the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories. The Declaration of Principles has yet to be scrupulously implemented, both in terms of abidance by its content and of observance of the timetable agreed upon, which timetable forms an integral part of the Accord.

The withdrawal and redeployment of the Israeli forces are prerequisites for the holding of Palestinian general elections. The holding of those elections would entrench democratic principles, guarantee political stability and constitute a qualitative shift in the peace process.

Israel was expected to take confidence-building measures, but it did the opposite by continuing to hold thousands of Palestinians in Israeli detention camps and prisons. It has released some people but has prevented them from returning to their homes, villages and towns. In effect, it "transferred" them to other areas.

We must emphasize that Israel, the occupying Power, must desist immediately from pursuing its policies and practices that violate human rights and are in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, such as collective punishment, curfews, closure of the occupied territories, continuous isolation of the city of Jerusalem, the confiscation of lands and demolition of houses. Israel's persistence in building new settlements and the expansion of existing ones constitute a violation of the letter and spirit of the agreement on the Declaration of Principles. Suffice it to recall here the heinous massacre at the Al-Ibrahimi mosque in the city of Hebron, which shocked world public opinion and was condemned by the Security Council.

Israel's persistence in changing the configuration of the city of Jerusalem and building settlements therein and the continued siege and isolation of the city from the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory constitute a violation of United Nations resolutions and are, at the same time, actions that run counter to the commitments and obligations Israel took upon itself in the Declaration of Principles.

Extremism and political instability have become widespread in the Middle East region because of the slow pace of achievement in the peace process. There must be tangible progress on both the Syrian and the Lebanese tracks. However, the intransigent Israeli posture does not give cause for optimism. Rather, it gives rise to the belief that Israel does not wish to establish a comprehensive and just peace, but simply wants to exact a price for its occupation of Arab territory.

Israel continues to invoke the guaranteeing of its security against potential threats. The fact is, however, that with its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction which include nuclear weapons, Israel is cause for Arab concern. This requires that the Middle East region become a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, including all chemical, bacteriological and nuclear weapons, and that Israel should accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

In order for genuine peace to reign in the region, such peace should be comprehensive and just. This requires the withdrawal by Israel from all the occupied Palestinian territory, including Al-Quds, from the Syrian Arab Golan and from southern Lebanon, in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

Given our commitment to the peace process in the Middle East, we hope that a new breakthrough in that process will become evident at the political and economic levels in order to strengthen the confidence of our people and the peoples of the region in the process and move them forward towards the achievement of peace in the land of peace and in the region as a whole.

Mr. Blandino Canto (Dominican Republic), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mrs. Kumar (India): My delegation is very happy to have the opportunity to speak on the occasion of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. This Day demonstrates the support of the international community for the people of Palestine in their quest for peace and justice and the realization of their legitimate goals and aspirations. India has historic ties of friendship and socio-cultural links with the Palestinian people. The Government and people of India once again reaffirm their support for the Palestinian people, who have struggled for decades for the restoration of their legitimate rights.

We are meeting here today in the wake of historic developments that have taken place in west Asia over the past year or more — developments that will have far-reaching consequences. The signing, on 13 September 1993, of the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, involving mutual recognition by the State of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization, was a courageous first step by visionaries aimed at ending for ever a chapter of feuding and bloodshed and at ushering in a new era of peace, stability and coexistence in the region. In particular, we salute the bold initiatives taken by President Yasser Arafat. The recent award of the Nobel Peace Prize to these visionaries is a fitting testimony to their unflagging endeavours.

India also welcomed the signing, in Cairo on 4 May 1994, of the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area and the subsequent creation of an atmosphere conducive to the return of President Arafat and other Palestinian leaders to Gaza and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority. The signing, at Erez on 29 August 1994, of the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities regarding the West Bank was a major and significant step in the implementation of the Declaration of Principles. Much, however, remains to be tackled and resolved.

The road to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in west Asia will be long and arduous. It will take patient, sustained and determined efforts to dismantle psychological barriers and to overcome resistance to the peace process. However, we have no doubt that the leadership on both sides is up to the task.

Alongside political negotiations, it is equally important to focus on economic and technological development in the areas administered by the Palestinian Authority. The challenge posed by pressing requirements of finance and infrastructure merits the urgent attention of the international community. This is especially vital to the task of nation-building. There will have to be a great deal of coordination between the efforts of the United Nations and its agencies. The creation of a coordinating mechanism for United Nations activities and the appointment, in June 1994, of Ambassador Terje Rod Larsen of Norway as Special Coordinator will undoubtedly make it easier to focus on developmental tasks. India stands ready, as in the past, to extend material and technical assistance to the Palestinian people as they consolidate their progress towards self-government.

India will shortly dispatch 100 metric tons of tea to Gaza and Jericho in fulfilment of the pledge that it made at the donors' conference in Washington on 1 October 1993. India has also offered 15 slots under the India Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme for the training of Palestinian paramedical staff in India over a period of two years. This is in addition to scholarships already being awarded to the Palestinians. India has offered to set up in the occupied territories a high-tech centre for computers and electronics. It also regularly contributes to the budget of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

As a country that has participated in the multilateral track of the peace process, India remains committed to the advancement of the cause of peace and security throughout the Middle East and to the resolution of outstanding differences through peaceful negotiations. The progress in negotiations between Israel and Jordan, which culminated in the conclusion of the Washington Declaration on 25 July 1994 and in the signing of the peace Treaty between the two countries on 26 October 1994, gives cause for optimism.

India sincerely hopes that there will be further advances in talks between all the parties concerned, especially on the other tracks of the peace process. That is the only way to consign for ever to history the long period of strife and discord endured by generations. We are convinced that the peace process affords the parties a genuine opportunity to forge peace and to build a new edifice of amity and prosperity for all the people in the region. A Middle East free from tension and conflict would greatly enhance the prospects for world peace and stability.

I wish to conclude by reiterating our commitment to the just cause of the Palestinian people and by expressing my Government's support for the peace process.

Mr. Allagany (Saudi Arabia) *(interpretation from Arabic):* Consideration of the question of Palestine today by the General Assembly bespeaks recognition of the United Nations abiding responsibility towards the question of Palestine until such time as an effective solution to this question in all its aspects is achieved. It is a responsibility that has been with the United Nations since the establishment of the Organization, beginning with the adoption by the General Assembly of the resolution on the partition of Palestine in 1947.

Since 1991, when the Middle East peace process began in Madrid on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the world has witnessed very important events in the region, including the beginning of the implementation of the PLO-Israel Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements.

We have seen Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip region and Jericho and the creation of the Palestinian Authority there, and we await the early transfer of competence to the Palestinian authorities in the rest of the West Bank.

My country has participated with the Gulf Cooperation Council in the march towards peace in the Middle East since the peace process began in Madrid. We have cooperated in promoting the bilateral negotiations between the Arab parties and Israel in addition to our effective participation in the multilateral negotiations.

The Arab delegations which participated in this peace process have demonstrated quite clearly the sincerity of Arab desires to achieve a just and lasting peace in the region, taking into account the fact that the multilateral talks are part of the peace process which began in Madrid and that those multilateral negotiations supplement and do not supplant the bilateral talks.

While we note with satisfaction the marked progress made on the Palestinian-Israeli track, we call on the international community and, in particular, on the two co-sponsors of the Peace Conference, the United States and the Russian Federation to take all possible measures to guarantee that Israel will desist from placing more obstacles in the way of the Palestinian Authority's exercise of its duties.

It is true that the Declaration of Principles deferred to a later date consideration of a number of fundamental and important questions such as the question of the holy city of Al-Quds, the Israeli settlements, Palestinian refugees and the borders. Nevertheless, a just and peaceful settlement to the question of Palestine must be based fully on international legality and on Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967), 267 (1969) and 338 (1973) and on the land- for-peace principle.

We believe that one of the major causes of tension and instability in the occupied territories is the continued existence of Israeli settlements. We note that Israel, since it signed the Declaration of Principles and the agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, has resorted to intensifying confiscation of Palestinian lands and expanding the existing settlements. We also note a marked escalation of violent and aggressive behaviour on the part of Israeli settlers who, in most cases, act with impunity. The international reports on the question of Palestine now before us under the item "Question of Palestine" and the sub-items before the Committees reaffirm that the Israeli settlers continue to threaten Arab civilians, fire on them, beat them, destroy their farms and demolish their properties. The dramatic proof of aggression and violence by the settlers was the massacre of the Arab worshippers at the Ibrahimi Mosque in the city of Hebron on 25 February 1994 during the holy month of Ramadan. The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People affirms in its report in document A/49/35 that the continued Israeli occupation is a major obstacle to the achievement of peace.

The question of the holy city of Al-Quds is at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict and on that basis we cannot see a lasting peace in the Middle East without a just solution to this question that would take into consideration the resolutions of international legality and in particular resolution 242 (1967) which stipulates Israel's withdrawal from the territories it occupied in 1967 and resolution 252 (1967) concerning the holy city of Al-Quds. On that basis, Israel must commit itself to refrain from effecting any demographic changes that would change the status of the city of Al-Quds or affect in any way future negotiations on the final status of the holy city. Al-Quds, for all Muslims in the world, is the first *Qibla* and the third holy site of Islam and no Muslim will rest until the Muslims regain all their rights in the holy city.

While the success of the Palestinian Authority in implementing the Declaration of Principles will depend on the efforts of the Palestinians themselves, it will depend also on the material and moral support of the international community. We have participated together with the Gulf Cooperation Council in the international donor conference held in Washington in October 1993 and have participated also with the Gulf Cooperation Council, in contributing to the costs of establishing the Palestinian police force and the cost of its training so that it may perform its duties, and have declared our full support for the Palestinian self-government authorities.

To speak of the makings of the continuance and success of the peace process is to speak, as of necessity, once again, of the responsibility of the international community to find a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement to the question of Palestine. We believe it is high time the Middle East region enjoyed stability and prosperity and became, as it was over the centuries, a fount of civilization, progress and prosperity.

Mr. Yaacobi (Israel): These are fateful days for Israel, for the Palestinians and for the entire Middle East. On the one hand, we are gradually bringing about a great change: from conflict to understanding, from bitter division to advancement. On the other hand, violent extremists are trying to destroy the progress we have already made. By killing innocent human beings they are trying to kill the chance for peace and normalization.

I shall refrain from responding to what was unfortunately said here very recently by the speaker for the PLO. Some of his statements were totally unfounded, but I shall make just one comment to set the record straight.

Forty-seven years ago today, the General Assembly adopted a resolution in which it decided on the establishment of two States in British Mandatory Palestine, the State of Israel and an Arab State. The Jews living under the British Mandate accepted this resolution and established the State of Israel on 14 May 1948. The Palestinians, unfortunately, with the support of all the Arab countries rejected the resolution and launched a war on the State of Israel.

The situation affecting the Palestinian people has undergone dramatic change in the recent past. We are in a new era in which a comprehensive peace is within sight in the Middle East. The world has witnessed, commencing in October 1991 with the initiation of the Madrid peace process, events of historic dimension. The Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, signed in Washington D.C. on 13 September 1993 by the Government of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), was followed by the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, on 4 May 1994, and subsequent implementation agreements relating to the Palestinian Authority. These represent milestones marking the long and arduous journey towards peace in the Middle East. Still ahead are negotiations on core issues, such as the return of Palestinian refugees, Israeli settlements, future boundaries, Jerusalem and the status of Palestine — all essential components for a lasting settlement. These developments cannot but have an impact on other areas of the Middle East as well.

Sri Lanka has welcomed all these developments, and we are happy to see Chairman Yasser Arafat in Gaza assume the leadership of the Palestinian Authority as it widens the range of activities falling directly under the responsibility of the Palestinian people.

These far-reaching changes have not affected the essential validity of the basic principles applicable to the complex of issues surrounding the Palestinian question. Indeed, a sense of urgency has now been added to the early realization of these principles — all fundamental to a just, viable and enduring peace in the region.

Much remains to be accomplished before these principles can be considered to have been implemented. First, a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Palestinian and other Arab territory occupied since 1967 has to be effected. Secondly, the inalienable national rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination, must not only be universally recognized, but be exercised in practical terms. Thirdly, the right of all States in the region to live in peace within secure and internationally accepted borders must become a reality.

Until the achievement of these basic conditions has been ensured, the United Nations retains a major responsibility for the Palestinian question. This is not, of course, to minimize the efforts made by a number of countries towards helping the peace process forward. The encouragement and support of the entire international community are essential. The United Nations should provide the central framework for its expression and practical extension.

However, while the favourable developments that have been universally welcomed are unfolding, there

remain several factors which tend to retard peace and security. There are delays in the implementation of, and tardiness in compliance with, the undoubtedly complex agreements that have been reached. Extremists on every side have tended to act as a drag on the pace of progress towards peace and stability. Bloodshed and loss of life have continued. While Israeli troop withdrawals have taken place in the Gaza, home to almost a million Palestinians, an Israeli military presence remains concentrated around Israeli security zones, military installations and settlements.

The settlements, which the Security Council holds as having no legal validity, have, in particular, ignited many tragic incidents like the horrific act of violence which took place on 25 February this year at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron. Many of the measures that followed in the wake of this massacre in fact imposed further hardships on the Palestinian people. They included economically crippling curfews and closure of areas of Palestinian habitation. Such measures have often been resorted to in other instances as well. I need not go into detail regarding the plight of the Palestinian people or human rights violations that are occurring in occupied Palestinian territory. These have been considered during consideration of the report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, which I am honoured to chair.

An important aspect of the Palestinian problem which requires urgent priority attention relates to the need for economic development in the Palestinian territories. The legacy of years of subjugation needs to be overcome. The Palestinian people must not only be politically free, but must also have the opportunities to be economically independent. The United Nations has a particularly crucial role to play in this area. The United Nations system has taken preliminary steps to provide coordination of development assistance to the Palestinian people, and agreements have already been reached with regard to programmes of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and other agencies. The "Peace Implementation Programme" of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is geared to improve the lives of Palestinian refugees in Gaza and the West Bank. The Special Co-ordinator of the Secretary-General is expected to serve as a focal point for all economic, social and other assistance to the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Achievements must match expectations. The courage displayed by all sides to negotiate in good faith agreements that seek to bring to an end years of suspicion and animosity must not be displaced. Nothing must be done that would discourage the peace process, which remains vulnerable. If hopes are frustrated, impatience in the negotiating option can lead to desperation, to anger and to violence. Leaders face intense pressure from their people to make peace really work. The Declaration of Principles signed in September last year must be transformed, through full compliance, into a practical reality which touches the daily lives of the people. Only then can peace take deep root, grow in strength and endure.

At the end of the war, a year later, the State of Israel survived. Some Palestinians became citizens of Israel; some became citizens of Jordan, which had captured the West Bank; some became subjects of Egypt, which had captured the Gaza Strip; and some became refugees in Arab countries.

I hope that we have learned the lessons of the past and can now turn to build a new future. I must say that I had some doubts about this after hearing the speaker for the PLO here.

For all peoples of the Middle East, and especially for the Palestinians and their leadership, these are decisive days. The events of the past 14 months represent an unprecedented turning-point. Even if this is just the beginning, even if many obstacles must still be overcome, the old status quo has been shattered forever.

On 13 September 1993 Israel and the PLO signed the Declaration of Principles. This agreement marked a watershed in the history of relations between Israelis and Palestinians. The Declaration of Principles rests upon several basic tenets: mutual recognition, direct negotiation without preconditions as the only framework to advance peace, and an interim period for confidence-building and for an orderly transition to the permanent status.

The signing of the Declaration of Principles set in motion a process that we hope will gradually lead to a resolution of the issues dividing us. We have already made progress towards this goal. On 4 May 1994, the Agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area was signed by Israel and the PLO in Cairo. It began implementation of the Declaration of Principles on the ground. On 13 May 1994 the Israel Defence Forces

withdrew from Jericho. Five days later, on 18 May 1994, they completed their withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Police immediately assumed authority for the security of Palestinians in these areas. Three months later, on 29 August 1994, we signed the Agreement on Preparatory Transfer of Powers and Responsibilities. This early empowerment Agreement transfers powers and responsibilities in five spheres from the Israeli Military Government and its Civil Administration to the Palestinian Authority. Immediately upon signature of the Agreement, responsibility in the area of education was transferred, in order to allow the new school year to begin on time. On 15 November 1994 Israel transferred responsibilities in the fields of welfare and tourism to the Palestinian Authority. In the near future we will see the implementation of early empowerment in the areas of health and direct taxation.

This has been an impressive journey towards fulfilling a common goal: enabling the Palestinians to assume responsibility for their own lives. Much has been accomplished in a relatively short time.

None the less, groups such as Hamas and the Islamic Jihad continue to embrace violence. They are aiming at derailing the progress towards peace, stability and development. As they pursue their terrorist activities, these groups receive support and encouragement from Iran and other countries. In recent months suicide bombers and fanatic gunmen have targeted innocent Israeli civilians and have wrought indiscriminate havoc and bloodshed. Lately, fundamentalist radicals affiliated with these groups have rioted against the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian Police in the Gaza Strip. Combating terrorism and violence is essential for increasing security. This, in turn, is essential for increasing trust and cooperation. The struggle is between those who are trapped in the past and those who are trying to build a better future.

For the builders of peace the immediate tasks are clear:

We have to enable the Palestinian Authority to meet its responsibilities under the Declaration of Principles.

All parties to the peace process must cooperate in the fight against terrorism. We cannot allow those who would drag us back to the past to succeed in their vision of renewed war and bloodshed. We have to curb the forces that are supporting the fanatic, radical groups.

Assistance from donor countries is crucial for developing infrastructure, education, health, sanitation and employment in the Gaza Strip, the Jericho area, and eventually in other areas in the West Bank. The Palestinian Authority and the donor countries need to find ways to ensure that funds are quickly transferred to such projects. The donor countries have now convened in Brussels to discuss this issue. We hope that all commitments will soon be fulfilled.

The entire international community must join in the effort to improve the basic conditions in Gaza, in Jericho and eventually in other areas of the West Bank. Every man, woman and child in these places must be able to pick the fruits of peace. If peace is to be rooted firmly in the hearts and minds of the people, it must touch every person individually. Its blessings need to be felt in every house, every school, every workplace and every community. In this way, more and more people will understand that peace is the best security; it is the key to assuming responsibility for oneself and for one's future; and it is the true road to economic, social and human advancement.

I would appeal to the Palestinian representatives to leave the issues which relate to the permanent settlement to their appropriate time, as was agreed by the parties. None of these are relevant to the present stage of negotiations. Let us concentrate on building understanding and cementing the agreement between us.

Israel, for its part, remains committed to the peace process with the Palestinians. Only if both parties meet their obligations under the Agreements signed can we create the better future that is our common goal.

Mr. Kalpagé (Sri Lanka): At the outset I should like to thank Ambassador Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for his introductory comments on the work of the Committee. The Committee continues to be a vital rallying point, both within the United Nations and outside it, to focus international attention on the situation of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt) (*interpretation from Arabic*): The General Assembly deals with the item on the Question of Palestine today at a juncture that has special significance for the history of the Palestinian people as the limited progress achieved so far in the peace process

points to the possibility that the day is not far off when every Palestinian will be able to exercise all his rights, including the right to self-determination.

Egypt's delegation wishes to point out that the Middle East peace process, which began at Madrid, three years ago in 1991, did yield significant achievements in 1993. Following the Declaration of Principles and the mutual recognition agreed upon by the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel in September 1993, the Palestinian and Israeli parties reached the May 1994 Cairo agreement on the Gaza Strip and the Jericho area. Next came the August 1994 agreement on the transfer of authority. Then, in October 1994, a peace treaty was signed by Jordan and Israel.

We hope that this series of achievements will lead to the full implementation of all the provisions of the resolutions that formed the frame of reference upon which the peace process was founded, namely, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The fundamental content of those two resolutions was: the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, on the one hand, and the withdrawal by Israel from all the Arab territories it has occupied since 1967, and the exercise by the Palestinian people of its legitimate national rights, on the other.

Our position in this regard has a solid foundation of fact, namely the principles agreed upon in the Palestinian-Israeli Declaration of Principles. In that Declaration, the two parties agreed on the principle of withdrawal by Israel from the Occupied Palestinian Territories and that Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho was to be a first step towards Israel's complete withdrawal from all the territories it occupied in 1967.

The present transitional stage will be a test of confidence-building between the two sides. Each side will have the right to expect from the other confidence-building measures. This transitional stage will also set the scene for the final negotiations, within the framework of international law and the relevant United Nations resolutions on such key issues as Al-Quds, settlements, the refugee problem and borders. We hope that the two parties will succeed in achieving those targets.

Israel bears a special responsibility with regard to making possible the success of this transitional stage. First of all, Israel must honour its obligations as an occupying authority and should refrain from effecting any further changes in the occupied territories, including Al-Quds, that would affect the outcome of the final negotiations. Israel must also refrain from taking measures that could increase the suffering of the Palestinian people, such as closing the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

In the last analysis Israel's own interest dictates that it should give the Palestinian people all possible assistance during the transitional stage and that it should mobilize all possible international support for that purpose. Egypt's delegation wishes to put on record its appreciation for all the constructive steps Israel has taken so far in this connection.

The time has come for the extensive international support for the peace process and for the Palestinian people to be translated into concrete measures to help the Palestinian Authority undertake the task of developing the Palestinian economy and of easing the suffering of many Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank. The Palestinian Authority must strengthen its institutions in order for it to be able to shoulder its increasingly heavy responsibilities.

The difficult economic and social conditions endured by the Palestinian people as a result of long years of military occupation, do not augur well for the peace process. Indeed such conditions carry within them grave dangers that threaten the gains achieved through that process so far. This must make it clear to all those interested in peace both in the region and in the world at large that a just, comprehensive peace will be possible only if the Palestinian people get the help they need in order for them to overcome the accumulated problems they face, provided that such assistance is extended to them within an assistance framework that embraces all the peoples of the region and enables them to improve their economies and explore the prospects of regional cooperation. It is in that way that the "peace dividend" may become visible and elicit wider popular support for the peace process.

While Egypt spares no effort in helping to achieve this objective, Egypt calls upon the international community to shoulder its responsibilities in this respect. It is regrettable indeed that we have to recall that many of the undertakings made at the October 1993 Washington donors conference for assistance to the Palestinian people are yet to be honoured.

The Palestinian people's support for the peace process is closely linked to the expectation that the economic suffering they endure will come to an end.

Should such expectations be frustrated, the support the peace process will need in the future may be affected.

In this connection, Egypt's delegation wishes to commend the speedy, effective response by the United Nations system in support of the Israel-Palestinian agreement. We refer in particular to the Secretary-General's appointment of Mr. Larsen as special coordinator of United Nations activities in the occupied territories. The programmes of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) have achieved great success in helping the Palestinians during the transitional stage. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) also plays a major role in supporting economic-development projects in the West Bank and Gaza.

Implementing two Security Council resolutions was the starting point of the Madrid Peace Conference. Therefore, it was only natural for us all to expect an increasingly important role for the United Nations in supporting the implementation of the outcome of the peace process in the light of the great interest the United Nations has always shown in the question of the Middle East, and in the question of Palestine in particular. There is no doubt that agreement between the parties concerned could facilitate the performance by the United Nations of a major role in making it easier to put into practice what the parties concerned may agree upon.

Such a role for the United Nations could go beyond the mere provision of economic and technical assistance to embrace confidence-building and peace maintenance arrangements as well as arms limitation measures in the Middle East.

My delegation would like to commend the efforts of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the positive role it plays under the able guidance of Ambassador Cissé in promoting the international community's awareness of the question of Palestine and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. We believe that the Committee's role will acquire additional importance in the future, in the light of the recent developments, as it could focus on helping implement the Israeli-Palestinian accord, and on initiating programmes that would enhance awareness by the international community of the needs of the Palestinian people at this new stage in the situation.

Proceeding from this, we hope the Committee will receive greater support from all Member States of the United Nations, and hope that all countries, especially the donor countries, will consider expanding the Committee's membership so that all countries wishing to contribute assistance to the Palestinian people may join in and thereby make it possible for that people to take the final steps we all hope for towards the desired just and lasting peace.

Mr. Maulana Fazlur Rahman (Pakistan) *(interpretation from Arabic)*: At the outset, my delegation would like to extend its gratitude and appreciation to Mr. Kéba Birane Cissé, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, for the most able and distinguished manner in which he has steered the work of the Committee. We would also like to thank him for his very lucid presentation of the report of the Committee.

The United Nations, historically, has taken a principled position on the Palestinian question. Since the outbreak of this conflict, the international community has called upon Israel to respect and honour the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people, including their inalienable right to self-determination. Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) therefore continue to provide a viable and just framework for a durable and comprehensive settlement to the Palestinian question. The Government and people of Pakistan remain committed to the expeditious implementation of these two resolutions.

The question of Palestine is being considered by the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session against the backdrop of some positive and encouraging political developments in the Middle East. These historic developments, however, reflect only the first steps towards a permanent settlement. On the positive side, they have resulted in the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, the establishment of the Palestinian police, the return of Chairman Arafat and other Palestinian leaders to Gaza, the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in the Gaza Strip and the Jericho Area, as well as the partial release by Israel of Palestinian prisoners.

My delegation is, however, greatly concerned over the continuation of repressive activities by Israeli troops and attacks by armed settlers. These attacks have been exemplified most tragically by the massacre of innocent Palestinian worshippers at Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron in February 1994. We are also concerned by the report of the Committee regarding the continued Israeli

settlement activities in the occupied territories, and in particular those in and around Al-Quds. We firmly believe that during the transitional period, Israel, as the occupying Power under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, remains duty-bound, during the transitional period, to respect the provisions of the Convention in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories, including Al-Quds. Another cause for concern is the Israeli Government's policy regarding the closure of the city of Al-Quds and that of the Gaza Strip, for security reasons. We also regret the fact that Israel still holds thousands of Palestinian prisoners inside Israel, in violation of international law.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express our admiration and appreciation for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) for its work during the past 40 years in mitigating the suffering of the Palestinian people. We commend the selfless dedication and unwavering commitment of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA and his staff, despite the extremely difficult circumstances under which they operate.

We note with satisfaction that UNRWA has entered a new era in its relationship with the Palestinian people following the landmark developments during the last year. In this regard, we welcome the decision of the Secretary-General on 29 June 1994 to relocate the UNRWA Headquarters from Vienna to the Gaza Strip by the end of 1995. This step is bound to ensure improved coordination, as well as effective monitoring and implementation of UNRWA's activities and projects. We also welcome the Secretary-General's initiative in establishing a task force on the economic and social development of the Gaza Strip and Jericho. We are pleased to note that some of the projects designed to improve the social and economic conditions in the area have already been implemented.

Pakistan commends the Secretary-General's appointment of a Special Coordinator in the occupied territories to facilitate the efforts of the United Nations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This appointment will also facilitate the presence of the United Nations specialized agencies, whose experience and expertise will be an asset in the two self-rule areas. It will also provide the Palestinian authorities with the confidence and training for assuming full responsibility for United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) programmes in the education, health and social services sectors. My delegation is convinced that the coming period will be crucial. It is imperative that major donors to UNRWA recognize their responsibility and correspondingly increase their contribution and support to help maintain stability and usher in an era of peace and security in the region.

Pakistan has always supported the just struggle of the Palestinian people for their right to self-determination and the creation of an independent homeland. We have continued to extend every possible support to the Palestinian people for regaining their sovereignty over the occupied territories.

My delegation is, nevertheless, of the opinion that the recent accords and agreements are no more than a first step towards reaching a just, lasting and comprehensive Middle East peace settlement. These steps must reinforce the obligations of the negotiating parties to address all the issues that are of international concern, particularly the status of Al-Quds Al-Sharif — Holy Jerusalem; Israeli settlements; and the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It is our sincere hope that a final settlement will conform to international obligations on these issues and lead to the Palestinian people's exercising their right to self-determination through the establishment of an independent homeland.

We also believe that a policy of piecemeal implementation of the accords is fraught with danger. A sincere and concerted effort needs to be made to achieve peace and stability in Palestine on a comprehensive basis.

My delegation fully supports the view that, as an organ of the General Assembly dealing with the question of Palestine, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People can make a valuable, positive contribution to United Nations efforts during the transitional period. In the pursuit of this noble cause, the Committee can count on Pakistan's full and unstinting support.

We hope that we will all be guided by God to peace.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting. We shall hear the remaining speakers tomorrow morning.

Introduction of reports of the Fifth Committee

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the

Fifth Committee on agenda items 112, 127 and 130. I request the Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee to introduce the reports of the Fifth Committee in one intervention.

Mr. Djacta (Algeria), Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee (*interpretation from French*): I have the honour to present to the General Assembly the reports of the Fifth Committee on agenda items 112, 127 and 130.

On agenda item 112, entitled "Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations", the Fifth Committee's report is contained in document A/49/673, in paragraph 5 of which, the Committee recommends to the Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution with the same title. That draft was negotiated in long informal consultations.

I should like to draw the attention of the Assembly to a number of important paragraphs in the draft resolution. By operative paragraph 1, the Assembly decides to establish an ad hoc intergovernmental working group of 25 experts in economics, finance, statistics and related fields. In operative paragraph 2, the Assembly invites the President of the General Assembly to appoint the experts in consultation with Member States, with due regard for equitable geographical representation, and to establish the working group as soon as possible. In the last operative paragraph, the General Assembly decides that the activities of the expert working group shall be funded within existing financial resources, but would welcome voluntary contributions from Member States towards the funding of such activities, including the possible defraying of the costs of participation of their own experts appointed to the group.

A report on the programme budget implications appears in document A/49/684, paragraph 3 of which states the Fifth Committee decided, without a vote, to inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 5 of its report (A/49/673), no additional appropriations would be required in the programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995.

Having said this, I am pleased to recommend to the Assembly the adoption of the draft resolution in paragraph 5 of document A/49/673 without a vote.

The Fifth Committee's report on agenda items 127, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda", and 130, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda" is contained in report A/49/687. In paragraph 6 of that report, the Committee recommends to the Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which the Committee adopted without a vote.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee which are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote or position.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records.

May I remind members that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401 the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I also remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we shall proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee.

Agenda item 112 ***(continued)***

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations: reports of the Fifth Committee (A/49/673, A/49/684)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution

recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 5 of its report (A/49/673).

The report of the Fifth Committee on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution is contained in document A/49/684.

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 49/19).

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 112.

Agenda items 127 and 130

Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda: report of the Fifth Committee (A/49/687)

Financing of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda: report of the Fifth Committee (A/49/687)

The President *(interpretation from Spanish):* The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The draft resolution, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda", was adopted by the Fifth Committee without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 49/20).

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda items 127 and 130.

Programme of work

The President *(interpretation from Spanish):* Members will recall that on 12 October 1994, at the conclusion of the general debate, the Secretary-General, in an address to the General Assembly, gave a disturbing picture of the financial situation of the Organization. The Secretary-General suggested that it was up to the membership of the United Nations to address this problem. Aside from the obvious fact that in fulfilment of Charter obligations all Members should pay their contributions in a timely manner, the Secretary-General pointed out some areas that might merit examination.

Given that this is a serious matter which affects the very functioning of the Organization, I felt compelled to carry out consultations with Member States as to the appropriate response and follow-up to the statement of the Secretary-General.

In this connection, in order to facilitate a wide and comprehensive exchange of views on this matter, the Assembly will hold plenary meetings under agenda item 10, "Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization", beginning on Monday, 12 December, in the morning. The list of speakers for that discussion is now open.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.